

Bio and Opening Statement

Bloggers Round Table - March 4, 2009

From early 1971 until my recent decision to retire I've strived to be a valuable part of what I consider the strongest military organization in the world, the US Army. Running into and breaking through brick walls of limited opportunity for women has soured my view of the US Army. However, the benefit I received over the years has strengthened my belief that the Army offers great opportunity and growth to anyone who has the ability and strength to embrace it.

From the beginning of my Army career as a tuba player in the Women's Army Corps Band until now, as I close out my military career as a journalist, I've experienced memberships in three state's National Guard organizations (Florida, District of Columbia, Alabama), the active Army and the Army Reserve. Some of the other jobs or "Military Occupational Specialties I've held are, Repair Parts Specialist, Psychological Operations Specialist, Cook and administrative skills instructor. I'm one of many soldiers who illustrates that a person can do the job they want in the Army, no matter how many jobs they want to do.

From joy to frustration, I've seen change in our society. I have seen changes in the views of our society on women serving in the military. And, most definitely, I've seen changes in the military.

My view is that women were once somewhat of a protected "oddity" that gave relief to olive drab, while many saved souls and, most importantly, lives. Now, I believe that we are looked on as an integral part of the military machine that defends our geographic country, as well as our policies and our values world-wide. A possible illustration of this is the change our uniforms have made from olive drab in the 70s to the current digital pattern.

Do I have regrets about my Army career? Three stand out.

I would have liked to attend the Armed Forces School of Music, where women were not sent in the early 1970s. As a member of the WAC Band, music was my passion and I wanted all I could take in.

My second regret is that I did not become an officer. I tried on two occasions, but was unsuccessful. I think I should have tried a third, forth and so on until successful.

Lastly, I had two breaks in service. A combination of frustration and listening to the wrong people led me to a decision to leave the service when leaving wasn't in my heart. Missing out on retirement years and points is one thing, but missing out on what I wanted to do was another, more serious deprivation.

Certainly, I don't dwell on any regret and can hardly think about regrets in view of how blessed I feel now in my day to day life. I've met some tremendous people during my military experience, and continue to meet very impressive people in my current job as a government contractor with CSC, a job for which the military prepared me.

Approaching retirement I'm not sure what I could pass on. Perhaps as a Non-Commissioned Officer, I hope that I have encouraged my fellow NCOs to do their best to nurture, advise, care-for, and even give a figurative "kick in the buns" to younger soldiers to live out their passions, whether the military is part of their lives for a short time or as a career. If a passion is passed on by NCOs, I believe that the means for a person to live their passion will fall into place.